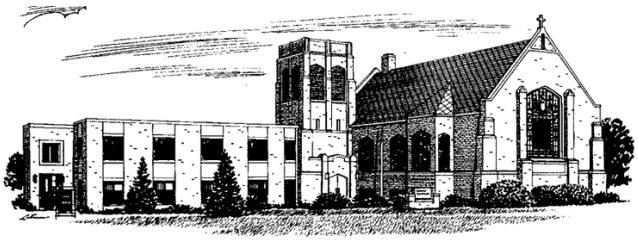
SARON NEWSLETTER

Saron Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA)
510 Main Street
St. Joseph, Michigan 49085

Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
Phone: 269-983-1273
Facebook: www.facebook.com/saronlutheranchurchst.joseph



The Rev. Joan Oleson, Pastor
Home: 269-983-2475
Email: oleson@saronlutheran.org

Marcus Roll, Senior Choir Director,
Bell Choir Director
Email: roll1mc@gmail.com
Irma Gorman, Organist
Margaret Froehlich, Administrative Assistant
Megan Savage, Financial Secretary
Email: financial@saronlutheran.org
Emily Gaul, Child Care

Typical Sunday Schedule at Saron:
During the School Year:
8:30 & 11:00 A.M. Worship
Childcare provided
9:40 Learning for Ages 2 – Adult

Summers (thru Labor Day weekend):
9:30 Holy Communion
Childcare provided
No Learning Hour

During the present Pandemic:
11:00 a.m. via Zoom

All are welcome!

We hold in prayer:
The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton,
Presiding Bishop, ELCA
The Rev. Dr. Craig Satterlee, Bishop of the
North/West Lower Michigan Synod, ELCA
The Episcopal Diocese of Western MI

Our Companion Synods:
Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras
Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea
Lutheran Church of Latvia

Saron's Mission:
Joyfully sharing God's love for all!!

Cold December flies away…..ELW 299

As we enter a new calendar year, I'd like to thank you for all the support shown to me (and the rest of the staff) during these Covid days. We welcome your patience and understanding as we've navigated the waters of life and ministry. Thank you for your kind words and many expressions of support.

As we have said many times, the church is not closed; we are simply meeting differently. I encourage you to read this newsletter carefully to see how you might engage in new or renewed ways. You will find news of our annual meeting, continuing Bible studies, a new Bible study (read the Bible in a year), the book group, and much more. There are reports (Inclusivity Task Force, Good Gifts, Fortify and Fly) and more.

Know my prayer for you is a good new year filled with the wonder and the joy of the Christ child, whose birth we are celebrating. Happy New Year! Be safe…and wear your mask! *Pastor Joan*

ANNUAL MEETING NOTICE
Saron Evangelical Lutheran Church will hold its 2021 annual congregational meeting on Sunday, January 24. At this meeting, we will hear reports of various committees and groups in the church including Project Fortify and Fly, elect members for the Congregation Council, Endowment Committee, and the Nominating Committee as well as persons to serve as voting members to this year's Synod Assembly (May 14-15, virtual). We will also approve the 2021 spending plan and amendments to our congregational constitution. All members are encouraged to attend. As this will be a Zoom meeting, you will be notified closer to the date of the login information and how voting will take place. Those logistics are still in process as we work to make sure all who choose to, can participate.

Saron's worship on January 24 will be held at 11:00 AM. The congregational meeting follows at 11:45 AM, both by Zoom.

Caring and Sharing

In Our Prayers –

Arla Huelsberg and Richard Schalon are at the Whitcomb Tower Retirement Center, St. Joseph; **Bernice Koski** is at Woodland Terrace.

Office Hours at Saron (these hours will vary during Covid-19)

Margaret (secretary): Mon-Tues, 9 AM - 1 PM
Weds of Newsletter Week, 9 AM - 1 PM
Volunteers: Weds, 9:15 AM - 11 AM (approximately)
Megan Savage(financial secy); Tues & Thurs 5:30 PM
financial@saronlutheran.org

When Pastor is out of town, emergency pastoral care information can be obtained by calling the church office (983.1273) or contacting the president of the congregation.

Note: E-mails meant for Pastor should be addressed to oleson@saronlutheran.org. E-mails to Margaret and the church office should be addressed to info@saronlutheran.org.

Happy Birthday Wishes to Saron's Members in January 2021.

Jan. 2 - Sophie de la Foret
3 – Richard Schalon
Kealana Gulley
4 - Zachery Booth
Kathleen Preston
9 - Anthony Kickles, Jr.
14 - T. J. Koehler
15 - Meredith Hammer
Pat Breyen
Walter Schmuhl
Colin Ashley
16 - Jonah Rood
18 - Hayley Frey
19 – Karen Hinckley
23 - Donald Hafer
24 - Lyra Krall
25 – Karen Johnson
28 – John Taylor

Happy Anniversary Wishes to the following Members in January 2021.

Jan. 1 - Charles and Linda Pater
2 – Jim and Jennifer Nicholas
19 – Steve and Denise Cook

"God's Blessings for a very happy day and year round"

If there is anyone who has been omitted, or, if the dates are incorrect from the birthday and anniversary list, please call the church office at 983-1273. Thank you.

PRAYER GROUP

Please call or email Pastor Joan with your prayer requests at oleson@saronlutheran.org. Thank you.

With Sympathy

We extend our sympathy to the family of Betty Ross upon her death on Wednesday, December 9. Betty's funeral will be at Saron when it is safe to gather in a group, likely in summer of 2021.

We also hold in prayer Merrily Smith and family at the death of her mother, Marian Hogue, at age 104.

God is our refuge and strength. Psalm 46:1a

As a dependence on technology has become synonymous with social distancing, it should come as no surprise to learn we used funds to make some much needed upgrades in December. We were able to replace Margaret's computer (a budgetary item) and purchase a camera and tripod (a Fortify and Fly expense) that can be used in the office or to stream/record worship services. There were many challenges in 2020 but always be proud of how we stayed connected by quickly adapting to the obstacles thrown in our path. We learned how to turn screen time into fellowship and that a familiar face on your monitor, tablet or cell phone can absolutely fill you with sustaining joy. We've come so far and the finish line is in sight!

As of the end of November 2020, we had collected $284,766 towards our 3 year pledge total of $371,165. We are so grateful for your generosity. Have a blessed Christmas and a happy new year!

Worship

FACEBOOK

We love to share pictures of Saron's ministry on our Facebook page and we get great feedback. It is our practice not to put names with the pictures. If you have questions, or prefer your picture not to appear, please contact Pastor.

SUNDAY SCRIPTURE READINGS

As you prepare for worship, you are invited to read and reflect on the Scriptures for the day.

Sun. Jan. 3 —
Second Sunday of Christmas
Jeremiah 31:7-14
Psalm 147:12-20
Ephesians 1:3-14
John 1:[1-9] 10-18

Sun. Jan. 10 —
Baptism of Our Lord
Genesis 1:1-5
Psalm 29
Acts 19:1-7
Mark 1:4-11

Sun. Jan. 17 —
Second Sunday After Epiphany
1 Samuel 3:1-20
Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18
1 Corinthians 6:12-20
John 1:43-51

Sun. Jan. 24 —
Third Sunday after Epiphany
Jonah 3:1-5, 10
Psalm 62:5-12
1 Corinthians 7:29-31
Mark 1:14-20

Sun. Jan. 31 —
Fourth Sunday after Epiphany
Deuteronomy 18:15-20
Psalm 111
1 Corinthians 8:1-13
Mark 1:21-28

Youth

Are you in grades 6-12? Please join us for youth group activities! For more info, contact Scott at *scottgaspari@outlook.com or (Cell) 847-373-8825.*

LEARNING

Saron is a congregation seeking to become more fluent in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture, in order that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened, empowered and sent by the Word.

Tuesday Evening Men's Bible Study

Thanks for your suggestions about what to study starting in January. We got a number of suggestions to study ACTS. So, that is what we will study starting on January 5. We will be working with a book titled "ACTS: Catching up with the Spirit. You might like to read along with the book. You can get it as follows.

Amazon
Kindle - $12:99
Paperback - $16.99
Used Paperback - $8.29
Or from Cokesbury
Paperback - $11.49

We are looking forward to our study. See you in January.

"Iron Sharpens Iron and One Person Sharpens the Wits of Another"

Saron Men's Bible Study meets every Tuesday at 6:00 pm using Zoom for communication. If you have any questions, feel free to call or text Bob Kynast (bobkynast@gmail.com) at 269-921-2786 or Don Hafer at 269-985-3637.

1ST SUNDAY BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

We traditionally do not meet in the month of January. Because of this, we decided we would have the time to read two books for our February group. So, on February 14th (second Sunday), we will discuss "The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek" by Kim Richardson and "The Giver of Stars by Jojo Moyes. Each book gives a slightly different factual/fictional account of the dedicated Kentucky Pack Horse library service of the 1930's championed by Eleanor Roosevelt.
Talk about smart, strong, dedicated women meeting the limits and challenges imposed upon them! Guaranteed you will learn something new and escape some of Winter's doldrums with good conversation. This will be a ZOOM meeting. Sign-on information will be sent to all who have expressed interest in our group. If you have questions or would like to be included, please call Kathy Cowall (269) 428-0354 or kcowall@hotmail.com.

"I read a book one day and my whole life was changed". (Orhan Pamuk)

Men's monthly Bible Devotions and Breakfast

We will not meet in January. Contact Dennis Lundgren for more information.

THURSDAY MORNING WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

On January 7, at 9:30 am, we begin our new Bible study. Again held via Zoom, we will look at Rob Bell's book, "What is the Bible?" Please contact Pastor if you would like Zoom info or need a book. You may also order online. This is a great time to invite someone who lives at a distance and can join us via the internet!

This is what Amazon has to say about the book:
Rob takes us deep into actual passages to reveal the humanity behind the Scriptures. You cannot get to the holy without going through the human, Rob tells us. When considering a passage, we shouldn't ask "Why did God say . . .?" To get to the heart of the Bible's meaning, we should be asking: "What's the story that's unfolding here and why did people find it important to tell it? What was it that moved them to record these words? What was happening in the world at that time? What does this passage/story/poem/verse/book tell us about how people understood who they were and who God was at that time?" In asking these questions, Rob goes beyond the one-dimensional question of "is it true?" to reveal the Bible's authentic transformative power.

THE BIBLE IN A YEAR

Have you ever wanted to read through the entire Bible in a year? Or do it again? You are invited to join me and others from Saron, and anyone else would like to join us, to do just that. Those interested will be given the list of Scripture to read for the month. There will be two opportunities for discussion. One will be an online Zoom discussion once a month, meeting time tbd. The other will be an ongoing discussion via a Facebook Group, through Saron's FB page. Of course, there is always the option of doing the readings, knowing others are doing them, without participating in the discussions. We begin on January 3rd! Let Pastor know if you are interested and would like the readings sent to you.

Women of the ELCA

Deborah Circle will not be having our usual Christmas Party this year. However, we will continue to contribute to the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen. Details will be forthcoming as to that process.

INSTALLATION OF SARON CHURCH WOMEN OFFICERS AND LEADERS

On Sunday, January 10, 2021, SCW officers and leaders will be installed. They are:

President: Melanie McCammon
Vice President: Linda Pater
Secretary: Elizabeth Kunkel
Treasurer: Denise Cook
Mission: Action Chair: Colleen Lundgren
CWU Representative: Irma Gorman
Deborah Circle Chair: Melanie McCammon
Dorcas Circle Chair: Irma Gorman

Hospitality

Watch for more news as we get closer to getting back together in the building.

Outreach

BENTON HARBOR SOUP KITCHEN

Thank you to Keith Stevens who provided pies to be served at the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen on Thanksgiving Day. The pies were donated in memory of his wife Jan, a long time chair of Outreach at Saron. Also thanks to Deb Standen for her help, including pie delivery & preparation.

If you feel comfortable helping prepare a sack lunch for the Soup Kitchen please contact Kathie Bradley (269-921-4665]. At this time we are not baking cookies to be included with the lunches. During this pandemic it is even more important to continue Saron's mission of *Joyfully sharing God's love for all!*

Thank you to all who continue to support this ministry with your time, contributions, & prayers.

After the self-quarantine **large cans of fruit are always needed at the Soup Kitchen** & can be dropped off anytime at the church. Any questions or to volunteer or provide cookies at a later date please contact Kathie Bradley at 269-921-4665.

Goats and piglets and chicks, oh my!

The people of Saron never cease to amaze. During the midst of a pandemic, you have made our ELCA Good Gifts program a great success this year. As of December 15, Saron will be supplying 12 goats, 7 pigs, 9 honeybee colonies, and 12 broods of chicks to needy, thankful people around the world. So far, your donations total $1,110. Thanks so much for your support this year. We will be accepting orders through Epiphany, so there's still time to get it on the fun!

From Saron Outreach folks

INCLUSIVITY TASK FORCE

Thank you to all who joined in the conversations that will help in the discernment of becoming a more intentionally inclusive community of faith. These discussions are ongoing. They will help us discern the possibility of becoming a Reconciling in Christ congregation. Watch for more! For now, mark your calendars for the following two opportunities, with details to come: Sunday, January 10 at 7 pm (Queer Eye Episode and Discussion) and Sunday, January 17 at 1 pm (Asking Those Clunky Questions). These times were chosen to give folks opportunity to join in and the Sunday morning learning hour does not work. Also, if you do not have internet available, we encourage you to contact a member of the team with any of your questions/comments/wonderings. For more information see the website at reconcilingworks.org or contact one of the task force members. Here is their contact information.

Laurel Gacek 269/470-6062
mlmg2445@sbcglobal.net
Laura Hicks 517/930-0579
lhicks42@gmail.com
Darlene Kiessel 269/313-4062
kiessel@me.com
Diane Madej (Open Hearts. Open Church, N/WLM Synod) 231/670-0328
dianemadej234@gmail.com
Pastor Joan Oleson 269/983-1273
oleson@saronlutheran.org

Here is Saron's proposed Welcome Statement, as affirmed by the council.

"As a community of faith who joyfully shares God's love for all*, we believe our lives and faith are strengthened by diversity. We strive to be a community who welcomes people of every ability, age, citizenship status, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, language, marital status, political perspective, race, and sexual orientation. Whatever life's circumstance, we openly welcome and value you. We celebrate God's unconditional love and respond joyfully to your presence here. All are welcome. You are welcome."*

Support

Tax Incentives during the Covid-19 Pandemic

"Above-the-line" tax deduction for charitable contributions

The federal government recently passed legislation to provide financial relief to families as a result of Covid-19. As part of the CARES Act, for the purpose of increasing the work of charitable organizations, individual taxpayers will receive new tax incentives for making charitable donations. The provision encourages individuals to contribute to religious, charitable, and educational organizations by creating a new "above-the-line" deduction (i.e. for taxpayers who take the standard deduction). This deduction permits deduction of up to $300 of annual monetary contributions.

This is applicable for tax years beginning after 2019, and does not sunset after 2020. A related provision increases the limitations on deductions for charitable contributions by individuals who do itemize. For those individuals, the 50% of adjusted gross income limitation is suspended for cash contributions made in 2020.

For members over 72 years old drawing income from an IRA, the Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) is waived for 2020, thereby reducing your tax burden.

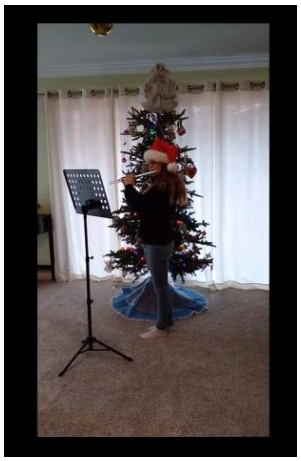
Effective January 1, 2020, the CARES Act waived RMDs for defined contribution 401(k) plans, 403(b) plans, governmental 457(b) plans, and IRAs for calendar year 2020. The waiver applies to RMDs to be made in 2020 and to 2019 RMDs that were due by April 1, 2020 (if not already made in 2019). The good news is that Qualified Charitable Distributions can still be made directly from an IRA account to the church that will both benefit our ministry and reduce the member's taxable income. As always, members are advised to check with their tax advisor for the latest information and interpretations before filing.

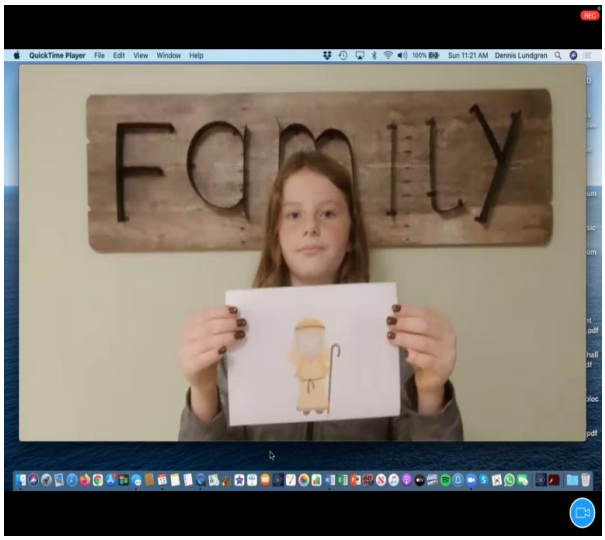
STOCK DONATIONS

Saron partners with TD Ameritrade, a brokerage firm, to accept stock donations. If you would like to donate stock, email Joe Ulrey to receive more information. Thanks! Joe Ulrey josephulrey@yahoo.com

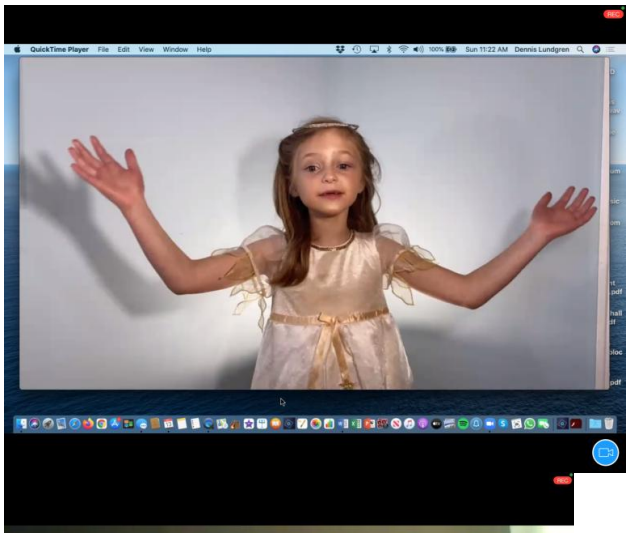
A new double pane window is installed

A new nativity shelter thanks to Ed Brunner, Bob Deaton, and Brad Frey…and a Thrivent grant!





Thank you to our youth and their families who helped share the Christmas story. Also, to Kristen Harper for facilitating and Dennis Lundgren for video editing.



SARON LUTHERAN CHURCH
510 MAIN STREET
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A Congregation of:
The North/West Lower Michigan Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

January 2021

Thanks to Brad, Nick, Dave, Kathie, Matt, Amanda, and Karen for moving furniture in preparation for the installation of new carpet in the lounge and meeting room areas, with vinyl at the sink

January 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 New Year's Day	2 No Men's Devotion Meeting
3 Worship at 11:00 am Via Zoom NO Confirmation	**4** 11:00 a.m. Prayer Time (in homes)	**5** 6:00 p.m. Men's Bible Study Via Zoom	**6** 11:00 a.m. Virtual Coffee Via Zoom	**7** 9:30 a.m. Bible Study Via Zoom	**8**	9
10 Worship at 11:00 am Via Zoom with Installation of SCW Confirmation 9:30; SS at 10:10 Via Zoom Inclusivity Discussion at 7 pm Via Zoom	**11** 11:00 a.m. Prayer Time (in homes) 6:00 p.m. Support Comm. Via Zoom Newsletter Articles due	**12** 6:00 p.m. Men's Bible Study Via Zoom	**13** 11:00 a.m. Virtual Coffee Via Zoom	**14** 9:30 a.m. Bible Study Via Zoom	**15**	16
17 Worship at 11:00 am Via Zoom Confirmation 9:30 Via Zoom Inclusivity Discussion at 1pm Via Zoom	**18** 11:00 a.m. Prayer Time (in homes) 7:00 p.m. Church Council Meeting by Via Zoom	**19** 6:00 p.m. Men's Bible Study Via Zoom	**20** 11:00 a.m. Virtual Coffee Via Zoom	**21** 9:30 a.m. Bible Study Via Zoom	**22**	23
24 Worship at 11:00 am Via Zoom Confirmation 9:30 Via Zoom 11:45 a.m. Annual Meeting Via Zoom	**25** 11:00 a.m. Prayer Time (in homes)	**26** 6:00 p.m. Men's Bible Study Via Zoom	**27** 11:00 a.m. Virtual Coffee Via Zoom	**28** 9:30 a.m. Bible Study Via Zoom	**29**	30
31 Worship at 11:00 a.m. Via Zoom Confirmation 9:30		**IF YOU ARE NOT, PASTOR JOAN**	**RECEIVING ZOOM AT oleson@**	**INVITATIONS AND saronlutheran.org**	**WOULD LIKE TO,**	**PLEASE CONTACT**